

AMENDMENT

In the Claims

This listing of the claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (currently amended) A vessel converted from a single outer hull construction with a spanning, single elevation, pre-located, topside deck into a double hull construction without alteration of the single outer hull and maintaining the topside deck at a single elevation, said single hull vessel having a central cargo tank flanked on either side by port and starboard wing tanks, said central cargo tank being defined by pre-located port and pre-located starboard sidewalls and pre-located fore and aft transverse bulkheads, and an added elevated floor in said central cargo tank, said elevated floor spanning said pre-located sidewalls and said pre-located bulkheads to define within said outer hull a sealed compartment separating the central cargo tank from the outer hull, said spanning elevated floor being of substantially a single elevation and substantially parallel to said spanning topside deck and substantially the same width as a width of the central cargo tank; and

at least one hatch opening formed in said a pre-located topside deck of said vessel to provide access to said central cargo tank, said hatch opening having a peripheral edge spaced away from and inboard of the pre-located port and starboard sidewalls of said central cargo tank so that said hatch opening and said topside deck remain substantially at a single elevation with minimal degradation of structural integrity of said topside deck.

2. (original) The vessel of claim 1 wherein said wing tank internal longitudinal bulkheads comprise the sidewalls of the central cargo tank
3. (original) The vessel of claim 2 wherein said elevated floor comprises a plurality of bottom plates attached to each other and to the sidewalls and bulkheads.
4. (original) The vessel of claim 3 wherein said plurality of bottom plates comprise a longitudinal framing system.
5. (original) The vessel of claim 3 further comprising added support members for supporting the elevated floor above the outer hull.
6. (original) The vessel of claim 5 further comprising added support members for supporting said wing tank internal longitudinal bulkheads.
7. (original) The vessel of claim 5 wherein said central cargo tank includes a longitudinal bulkhead extending along a length thereof to form a plurality of central cargo tanks, at least one of said central cargo tanks having said elevated floor.
8. (original) The vessel of claim 7 wherein each of said plurality of central cargo tanks has an associated elevated floor.

9. (cancelled).

10. (currently amended) A vessel converted from a single outer hull construction with a spanning, single elevation, pre-located, topside deck into a double hull construction without alteration of the outer hull and maintaining the topside deck at a single elevation, said single hull vessel having a central cargo tank flanked on either side by pre-located port and starboard wing tanks, each of said wing tanks having pre-located internal longitudinal bulkheads defining the sidewalls of the central cargo tank, wherein said vessel is converted into double hull construction solely by adding an elevated floor spanning said sidewalls to define a sealed compartment separating the central cargo tank from the single hull, said spanning elevated floor being of substantially a single elevation and substantially parallel to said spanning topside deck and substantially the same width as a width of the central cargo tank; and

at least one hatch opening formed in said a pre-located topside deck of said vessel to provide access to said central cargo tank, said hatch opening having a peripheral edge spaced away from and inboard of said pre-located internal longitudinal bulkheads of said central cargo tank so that said hatch opening and said topside deck remain at a single elevation with minimal degradation of structural integrity of said topside deck.

11. (original) The vessel of claim 10 further comprising a plurality of transverse bulkheads, said transverse bulkheads defining the central cargo tank, said elevated floor extending between and attached thereto.

12. (original) The vessel of claim 11 wherein said plurality of transverse bulkheads comprises more than 2 to thereby form a plurality of central cargo tanks, each of said central cargo tanks having an associated elevated floor.

13. (original) The vessel of claim 12 wherein each of said elevated floors comprises a plurality of bottom plates attached to each other and to the sidewalls and bulkheads.

14. (original) The vessel of claim 13 wherein each of said elevated floors comprises added support members for supporting each of the elevated floors above the outer hull.

15. (original) The vessel of claim 11 wherein said central cargo tank includes a longitudinal bulkhead extending along a length thereof to form a plurality of central cargo tanks, at least one of said central cargo tanks having said elevated floor.

16. (cancelled).

17. (currently amended) A method for converting a vessel from a single outer hull construction with a spanning, single elevation, pre-located, topside deck into a double hull construction without alteration of the single outer hull and maintaining the topside deck at a single elevation, said single hull vessel having a central cargo tank flanked on either side by pre-located port and pre-located starboard wing tanks, said central cargo tank being defined by pre-located port and pre-located starboard sidewalls and fore and aft transverse bulkheads, the

method comprising adding an elevated floor in said central cargo tank, said elevated floor spanning said pre-located sidewalls and said pre-located bulkheads to define with said outer hull a sealed compartment separating the central cargo tank from the outer hull, said spanning elevated floor being of substantially a single elevation and substantially parallel to said spanning topside deck and substantially the same width as a width of the central cargo tank; and

forming at least one hatch opening in said a pre-located topside deck of said vessel, said hatch opening providing access to said central cargo tank, said hatch opening having a peripheral edge spaced away from and inboard of the port and starboard sidewalls of said central cargo tank so that said hatch opening and said topside deck remain substantially at a single elevation with minimal degradation of structural integrity of said topside deck.

18. (original) The method of claim 17 further comprising adding support members for supporting said elevated floor above the outer hull.

19. (original) The method of claim 17 wherein the step of adding an elevated floor includes installing a plurality of bottom plates.

20. (original) The method of claim 19 wherein the step of installing a plurality of bottom plates includes installing a plurality of bottom plates that span the sidewalls and attaching adjacent bottom plates to span the bulkheads.

21. (Cancelled).

22. (original) A vessel converted by the method of claim 17.
23. (original) A vessel converted by the method of claim 20.
24. (Cancelled).
25. (currently amended) A vessel converted from a tanker vessel with a single hull construction and a spanning, single elevation, pre-located, topside deck into a bulk cargo carrying vessel with a double hull construction without alteration of said single outer hull and maintaining the topside deck at a single elevation, said single hull vessel having a central cargo tank flanked on either side by pre-located port and pre-located starboard wing tanks, each of said wing tanks having internal longitudinal bulkheads defining the sidewalls of the central cargo tank, wherein said vessel is converted into said bulk cargo carrying vessel with double hull construction by adding an elevated floor spanning said pre-located sidewalls to define a sealed compartment separating the central cargo tank from the single hull and by adding a hatch opening in a pre-located topside deck of the vessel above the central cargo tank to provide access to the central cargo tank, said hatch opening having a peripheral edge spaced away from and inboard of the longitudinal bulkheads of said central cargo tank so that said hatch opening and said pre-located topside deck remain substantially at a single elevation with minimal degradation of structural integrity of said topside deck; and said spanning elevated floor being of

substantially a single elevation and substantially parallel to said spanning topside deck and substantially the same width as a width of the central cargo tank.

26. (previously presented) The vessel of claim 25 wherein said hatch opening is dimensioned in a manner to allow prefabricated modular sections of the elevated floor to be passed through the hatch opening when the elevated floor is installed in the central cargo tank.

27. (previously presented) The vessel of claim 25 wherein said hatch opening is dimensioned in a manner to allow a crane positioned above the hatch opening to access substantially all areas of the central cargo tank.